

## Bibliobservatory Episode 10 Podcast Transcript – January 31, 2020

[ Background Noise, Music ]

>> Ivette Villarreal: Welcome to BibliObservatory, a new series of the South Carolina State Library's podcast LibraryVoices. I am Ivette Villarreal, BibliObservatory hostess.

>> Caroline Smith: And I am Caroline Smith, the inclusive services consultant at the South Carolina State Library. This is a special transmission from Columbia, South Carolina to explore the universe of books and stories that people treasure from their childhood and how those stories define the lives of people touched by them.

>> Ivette Villarreal: Today we have a wonderful guest, Charles Brooks III. And we are so happy to have him today here. I happened to meet him in back in 2003. And it is such a joy to welcome you today Charles to our BibliObservatory Podcast. Thank you for coming.

>> Charles David Brooks: Thank you for having me. I must add though I have a middle name. And must add that for my mother said to me, "Your name is Charles Brooks, but I give you David. So, you are David." And so, I grew up as David. And the business world, outside world, it was Charles Brooks. My business name in the world of theater is Charles David Brooks III. And David will honor my mother for she gave me that name, David.

>> Ivette Villarreal: David.

>> Charles David Brooks: David is the story of my life according to my mother. David is the book I wrote as I live page by page. Charles Brooks is a cover up. It's a masquerade. It identifies me with school, you know, work, social security, you know, all those things, driver's license. But David, David is my name.

>> Ivette Villarreal: What would you like our listeners to know about you?

>> Charles David Brooks: That it's true I am born in the North in a village called Harlem. And there as a child -- And I really do not want to use the word child because it gives connotations of what a child is today. And a child then, as I'm born in 1939, a child then was a little person. And being a little person, I was responsible. Meaning my mother had no fear at the age of three that I would walk down the streets with some of the older boys, which mothers and fathers were friends of my mother and father. So, it was a family thing they just was older. But they had to watch over me because I was younger. And on Saturday mornings we would go to Saint Nicholas Avenue. There was a subway there on 125th Street, it was during World War II. And troops were leaving with their little military bags just going down in the subway, but before going down the subway they would stop to watch me and my little group do soft shoe, which was another form for foot, or hoofing as we used to say. And so, I would be there and I could see these mothers, and daughters, and sons, and loved ones, girlfriends, and they hugging on each other, and in my mind's eye I could see that I knew what time it was, so that I knew going down that subway after they release each other from the hugs, that they may never see each other again. I knew that. And that gave me a special interest. And I looked each person in the eyes and I saw a glow in their eyes. And I believe to this day that glow was me. And so, we would do our little,

they would do a little soft shoe and since I was so little, I was supposed to pick up the little pennies, nickels and dimes as they hit the little pot. And if it didn't go in, it'd roll off and I would scramble to pick up the change and put it back in the pot. But I would constantly be looking back to see what they were doing because I wanted to get into it too. But I still was handling the money and the audience would laugh and giggle, you know, because I was a little -- I appeared to be cute to them, you know. And so, that was okay because, you know, they were being happy for a moment. And then one day, boom, I was leading the group. I had learned the routine. And so, they dressed me up in the little Knickerbocker suit. I don't know if you know what I'm talking about. It had stockings and pads came up so far. Because I was a little guy and only men wore long pants. And that was the way it was in those days. So, the little Knickerbocker suit and I had a nice little tweed tan to go with the tweed Knickerbocker suit. And all this was dressed up on the corner as the people took care of me. And of course I would come home, when I would come home I emptied my pockets on the kitchen table, you know, "Here mommy." [laughter]. You know, so my story begins with me. And so, as a child performer I learned how to conduct myself, handle myself. I knew when to speak, when not to speak. I met some of the greatest people in the world at that day that I eventually performed with, who began to teach me diff -- even some languages, like a little French, [foreign language], a little this, [foreign language] Español, or whatever. These little things I learned. So, I was being educated as a child. Even ran into or rather Fred Astaire ran into me because, you know, he was fascinated with children and he would sponsor little children production, which I was a part of. So, I was eventually going into the mainstream of things. And then a man in a suit came one day to us and offered us a street corner on Seventh and Broadway in front of Cafe Metropole where a drummer by the name of Jean Cooper, Cooper, who was the husband of Pearl Bailey, would play drums in the window and he was a -- quite the drummer. And we would hoof to his beats. And here you could see like what look like a million sea of people with black suits and little bald caps - hats doing that -- out there just watching us because, you know, with those monies was a lots of money. So, as a child during World War II, I was bringing home lots of money. So, I was doing my part as far as I was concerned. In my head, I was making my contribution, you know, to the family. I didn't consider taking any money for myself because at the time I didn't think in terms of I needed anything, you know. They all went to the house. And so, that went on and then a truant officer came around in New York City, truant officers, right? "How old are you?" You know, then he went on, "Where's your family?" You know, then, "You should be in school." And I didn't know what the school? What the heck? I didn't know anything about no school. I was in school. I was learning more than anyone could ever imagine. So, and I was very reluctant about it. So, I went to school. And there was this long line of registering students and it was leading down this hallway. And I saw an opening and it looked dark and I wondered what was in that darkness. So, as I got closer and closer to the table to register, I kind of peeked in there and it was like an auditorium and it was like a theater. It was like a theater. I said, "Well, maybe this is where I'm supposed to be. Another level of theater from street theater to, you know, institutional theater, or public education theater." And I didn't know that some of the teachers were watching me. And I wasn't paying attention who was watching and who was not. I was just exploring the environment and seeing where I fit in. And evidently they saw that. Fortunately for me, these teachers, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Workman, Mrs. Martin and all them, I can't remember some names, they were Broadway entertainers working as teachers. And evidently they tapped on me. So, Mr.

Workman says, "Well, you're going to go upstairs and work with me in the workshop so I can show you about the sets and things like that." And then Mr. Roberts said, "Well -- "You know, he was doing a play on Broadway at the time and he said, "Well, I'm going to work with you on developing some theatrics and that kind of thing." Next thing I know that little auditorium as it was, became a theater for me and I'm on that stage conducting The Pirates of Penzance. I remember that was my first major production.

>> Ivette Villarreal: How old were you?

>> Charles David Brooks: Pirates of Penzance. I was six.

>> Ivette Villarreal: Dou you have any picture?

>> Charles David Brooks: I'm sure there must be some somewhere, but, you know, in between that time, my mother we had to separate. And this was one of the most difficult parts of my life at the time between the age of three and six. Dad had to go off to the army and mother had to go and work and pick up where he left off at. And little children went to work in the factories and those who had people in the South who had farm or were farmers would go there. We had people, my mother and father are from Barnwell County, South Carolina, and we had farm there. The Butlers and my mother's a graduated Claflin University and entrepreneur. And my grand uncles and aunts, they were all college graduates. And so, many of them attended together the institute. And they had schools that they built, Butler High School, Butler Elementary School, this, that and the other. And so, there -- So, but getting there was the situation where my life seemed to make a turn -- made a -- actually made a turn. Because we was at the Pennsylvania Railroad Station, which is now where Madison Square Garden is in Manhattan, and we were on the platform and the train is right there. My mother, she's bent down to where myself and my sisters stood. And she's looking at me and she's telling me, "Now you must be my little man. So, I want you to take care of your sister," and I'm not even six yet "I want you to take care of your little sister." She did put shipping tags on us. "And I'm going to want you to take care of your sisters. Don't interfere with whatever they do. You'd be on the outskirts at the end and be nearby just to watch them, to make sure there'd be no danger. As soon as I can, I will come get you. And here's a picture of your godmother," So, "and listen out. And when you hear Denver, South Carolina, the reporter will say Denver, then when you get off, you look and when you see a woman look -- " and she had everything on her that she was dressed in that photo, I couldn't miss it. And we all ran toward her since women used to wear frocks where they could open it up like this, like birds do with feathers, with wings. And we ran into her and she covered us around with her frock. And so, we knew we was safe. And so, that was -- But then I watched my sisters and I remember one day they had a wood plow, pine wood, and there was a red snake. I saw once in there, and I saw this and I didn't know whether it was poisonous or not. All I knew was that there was an ax there and not to disturb them. I went and chopped it in half so it wouldn't attack them. And she saw that, my godmother, Ruth Bali, saw that and she came outside and she said, "Let's move it over here. And we got to burn it because it can grow another head and be alive again." And I remember looking out the window out there all night long until it turned to ashes so it wouldn't come back alive again. So, but anyway, I went to school there and in New York, because we went back. She did come get us so went back to New York. I also did dancing. I mean real dancing,

international cultural dances. I did Russian [inaudible] whatever. I did Western something, what is it? Scoop to the loo, dah, dah, dah, dah. What was the name of that thing? I don't remember all the dances. But we did a lot of different dances in costume and that was sponsored by the New York City Cultural Arts Affairs during that time. And so, but that's the story of my childhood life, and eventually I grew up. Went in the military at the age of 17. I left home to go off into the world. I wanted to make room. My family had grown from myself and my two sisters to another two sisters and a brother. And in my mind's eye at 17, attending boys high school in Brooklyn, New York, The famed Boys High School where Sam Livingston and Alfred Drake. And Alfred Drake was a prominent Broadway actor, but they were alumnus and they had this drama room where they would come and those of us that was interested in drama would sit and listen to them, do what I'm doing right now. Their stories was telling about their experiences as I'm telling my story. And, but the thing about Alfred Drake is I had access to the backstage on Broadway where he was performing. And so, I had entry and I became familiar with what the workings of the backstage, the crew, the gaffers, the everything, the painters, costume designers, this, that, and the other, which eventually I found that I had a cousin at Stina who was the costume designer at the Apollo Theater. So, now I would go up there and sit with her and look over the stage and see the performance. So, my life just evolved like that. The military I went in, again, to make room and then to find out whether I'm a man or not, you know what I mean? And when I say that, I'm talking about being away from the family, being away from the community, being away from people that have watched over me all of my life up until 17 years old. Could I survive? Could I deal with it? With this big wide world out here without those kinds of comfort zones or protections. And so, I went off into the military and, you know, that was an experience there, you know. I don't want to go too deep into that. You said don't get too heavy. So, I won't get into the psychological, biological and chemical warfare techniques and methods. So, we'll move on from there. And I returned home. By the time I returned, I was in Brooklyn and there I had a series of experiences that I never anticipated that I would have, and I proceeded to start writing. And I wrote lyrics and those lyrics went into Broadway to become recordings on 45 recordings. And then I did some producing and some road managing with production companies and that kind of thing. And so, everything just continued that way. Dealt with all the hitters, you know, Joe, yeah, what's that? Maurice Levy, all those people that owned record companies and everything. And I was kind of building myself up a little bit too. And that's when I discovered that in the world, in the real business world, as I was becoming a bit more enhanced with knowledge and actually hands-on to business and dealing with business, that it would bring out all these other business people and it feathers Maurice Levy, Joe Bar, all these big time guys. And which then would try to muscle me. And then that's when I realized that show business wasn't just show business, it was show and then it's business. And the business part of it had to be taken care of. And so, therefore I had to make certain stances and to make myself as known as well as anybody else. You know, not for you to become frightened of me, but to let you know that I can stand on my own. And by that time I said, well, it's time for me to relocate. So, I went on out to California to jump into the Motion Picture Industry. So, when I went out there, I went to the Knowles Building on Hollywood Boulevard. They had a sign, it said Office For Rent. It's old man Knowles was outside the building when I ran up onto him and told him, "I just got out. My father was my banker. Looking to establish myself. I see you have an office for rent. I don't have any money right now, but I'd be able to handle my

business." He says, "I believe you would." Took me up and there had my offices. Gigantic Enterprises, Motion Picture Company.

>> Ivette Villarreal: Wow.

>> Charles David Brooks: And then I put a sign out, all the people who are unrepresented come and see me. I will represent you. And here all these people came. Actors, dancers, comedians, acrobats, everybody. Someone came up and then you have all these people come around you that wants to help. Says, "Look, you need a license." And went downtown and for \$100, purchase me a producer's license to put my shingles up. And so, this went on for a while and I got -- broke into the industry. You know, 20th Century Fox, worked with Jean Alexander, you know, James Earl Jones. We did The Great White Hope. I worked with, my favorite one was Quinn. He was my favorite actor. He was with the Metro Golden Mayor's actor. We did a thing called Flap about the student riots at Columbia University against the war, Vietnam War. Flap. Quinn, Anthony Quinn.

>> Ivette Villarreal: Anthony Quinn.

>> Charles David Brooks: That's who I'm talking about. And I remember working with him, he plays chess on the set and Paul Missouri was the director. And I got that job for \$25 and a box of lunch in 1968, and a lunch lunchbox.

>> Ivette Villarreal: Let me ask you.

>> Charles David Brooks: Yeah.

>> Ivette Villarreal: In those moments when you are in front of Anthony Quinn, for example, any of those memories from your past when you were a child, when you were between three and six, did they come back to your mind?

>> Charles David Brooks: Actually, what, as I'm speaking now on things I've forgotten. Every episode in my life is just what it is. An episode. When it's concluded, I move on to the next chapter. That's not to say they're not there because they're there, but I don't spend the time. Like, I've had students who, where I teach at Benedict College, teach theater as a professor and the theater operation manager, and the director of the theatre ensemble, and the playwright or the college, come to me and say, with photos and say, "Hey, is this you?" You know. "Yeah. Where did you get that from?" I don't tell them I'm this, I'm that, look, I did this, I think, I don't think about it. Only thing I think about is today, right now, because as a child I was taught very on that tomorrow is the day you thought about yesterday. So, I must always pay attention to today. And do today what they say don't put off till tomorrow, [inaudible] well, I live by that.

>> Caroline Smith: Who was it that told you that at the time?

>> Charles David Brooks: My great grandmother told me that. You know, birds of a feather flock together, you know, association brings assimilations, you know, all you have to do in this world is do and be, be and do and you can write volumes on that, fill this whole library. You know, little tiny little jewels, and rubies, and pearls like that, that today, you know, I have, they benefit me. So, no, I didn't think about that. I didn't think about when I was a

child. I was just thinking about, damn, this little Anthony Quinn right here, Paul Missouri over there, and I'm doing this job. And what the director tells me to do is what I'm doing and lay it at the camera, picks me up fine, if it don't, I'm doing what I was asked to do. And somehow Paul Missouri called me up -- Missouri called me over, he said, "I'm breaking the set down for two hours break. I got another job for you. I like the way you work." And I was working on different sets and I didn't do all major roles in the beginning. Now I want to make that straight, you know, I did bit parts and stuff like that. But I was accountable. I mean it was -- And then I decided that I'm going to go to school. I needed to learn about what I've been doing all my life. That's what I started thinking about. I need to learn about what I have been doing. Not only that, I didn't even know where I was at. I wanted to find out, where am I at? I heard it was the American dream, but what is that? I didn't spend the time to find, who are these people, where did it come from, why are we all here? And so, I enrolled into the Los Angeles City College. It was a really at one of the top notch theater academies in the nation. Third internationally. And I auditioned and got into that school and that exposed me to a lot of things. And, you know, Mike -- Mark Hamill from Star Wars, I was his publicity agent in college [laughter]. And, you know, there was a lot of it. Lionel from A Good Time, I mean, what was it? Moving on up to the big time. I forgot the name of that thing with -- Sherman Hemsley in there. We all were there together, you know. Suzanne Passe, producer from Motown. All of us was there together. So, then from there I got recruited to go to UCLA on the, what was known as the Upward Bound Scholarship. They wanted me to go in and to, as a mission really, to get into the Theater Arts Department. Paul Williams, the actor that went in and was the first man of color to break into the Acting Department, and now there's a Directing Department, and I got into there. And so, that was in the whole other world that introduced me to another form of theater that dealt with community, social issues, social justices and I was assigned to Mafundi Institute on 130 Wilmington in Watts, which is where [inaudible] evolved from and came out of. And there I was the artistic director and wrote a play called Search dealing with people. This is all out of UCLA as I indicated. I have left that arena. It says in this search of finding who I am in the midst of everything and taking all the anthropological courses, cultural, social, physical, all of these kinds of things, I began to become more and more conscious, not only of my surroundings but the surroundings of peoples. I got caught up with Cesar Chavez. I don't know if you all know him, the farm worker thing. And so, therefore Paul Bullocks from the industrial relationship on a state level because the Ujima Village and the mothers of Watts had Ernest Williams III write out and agreement in blood. And I took that back to UCLA and said, "These people are serious." And they said, "This is phenomenal." And they passed it on to the state and the state passed it to their industrial relations and Paul Bullocks came down and said, "What do you need?" And so, then we started developing because they had already had the early Watts riots and -- but never -- there was never an explanation as to what really happened. What's the root cause of things? And people was barricade in their buildings, little children was - there was a lot of fear, there was -- they didn't know what to do, this and that. And I said, "Oh my goodness." And see, I was looking to continue on in Hollywood. You know, to go in there and become a mogul in the most impingement industry. Now, here I am, and locked in a community dealing with people who are caught up with basic everyday needs and especially the children. And if I thought of myself as a child, it might've been there at that point because I looked at them and they were nowhere near where I was at, at the age of three. They were

deficit, you know, in a knowledge and awareness and that kind of thing. And now here I am. Well, I was kind of reluctant to get involved in the very beginning, you know, because then I was kind of getting kind of use to the materialistic world, but then it had to leave it all, you know? And so, go in there. So, this is where I began to become that artist that suffer, that artist that bled, that artist that pained to get out and measure out the truth. And, which became my thesis for my graduation from the university. And that's already logged in. And that was a powerful piece of blood drenching work without -- I mean just being without trying to be appeasing, or pleasing, or maybe I'll make it shine like this, or maybe I'll do this. I think that is the epitome of critical thinking and critical analysis. When you can flesh out the truth or whatever that is. And the truth can only be defined at, for me at that time, as within the people.

>> Ivette Villarreal: Did you remember the first day when you were performing on the streets in New York?

>> Charles David Brooks: Yeah.

>> Ivette Villarreal: Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

>> Charles David Brooks: Well, like I said, me and the guys would leave home.

>> Ivette Villarreal: Were you scared? Were you excited?

>> Charles David Brooks: No, no, no, no, no. I wasn't --

>> Ivette Villarreal: You were little. Three.

>> Charles David Brooks: Yeah, but it wasn't -- you think about what you know as three years old, it don't fit my package. We wouldn't know where like what a three year old is today.

>> Ivette Villarreal: I would love to hear a little more about all your memories with your grandmother and her sayings. The sayings --

>> Charles David Brooks: Well, my grandmother --

>> Ivette Villarreal: She told you.

>> Charles David Brooks: She told me that I am a king. That when she came to this country on the ship that in her village, she -- the houses was like in a, I guess semis square, when you had houses along here and you had up in the center and she lived there because her father was the chief or the leader of that village. And that's my lineage with her as far as royalty is concerned. And she told me that when she would wake up in the mornings, she would take her daily constitution through her village. And that's the first time I've heard the word constitution. So, I didn't, you know, and this wasn't like in school. My first school, I was with my great grandmother. And so, and she said, you need to take a daily constitution for your life. And then we would lie out at night on a clear night, a little [inaudible] and she would teach me the constellation. And she would show me and I could see everything that she was teaching me and show me about how the story fits right in with the constellation. And that was verified when I was about to graduate from UCLA and I needed astronomy.

Because as a director I needed to study every facet of a human being, even that which in astronomy. So, Abel Spencer was the foremost astrologer at that time. I had to see him. And he says, "Well, you need, before you take Astrology 2, you need to take 1." I said, "But that's going to hold me back." And I told him the story that I just told you about my great grandmother and he pulled out the - from his bottom drawer of his desk some plates, and put them on the table. And he says, "Identify these." And I did. And I was off to Astrology 2. So, I thank my great grandmother. And she'd been with me all this time too, you know. Because she's the one that told me about the ancestors, and she told me about her taking her place among the ancestors, and she taught me, she said that she would always be there to protect and at the sea. And that happened. You know, I always can feel her when I feel a warm breeze brush by my cheeks, then I know I need to start going that way because if I continue this way, there's going to be some danger there. And I will always make that move and I kind of would get in a position and look back and say, "Wow. Yeah."

>> Ivette Villarreal: The protection.

>> Charles David Brooks: Yeah. So, you know, I was born with a veil. She says I'm born with a veil over my face. I'm just, you know, I've been raised by nature with the overlapping of the universe. You know, I think when I walked down the streets with this, I don't think people recognize me or even know that I'm among them because I'm don't put myself in that position to be recognized or even acknowledged. I try to maintain a positive within the spirit. The spirit that which that comforts me and provide me with the nourishment that materialistic does not provide for me. It can only be a physical, superficial moment where spiritually is for now and everlasting and ever more to be, you know.

>> Ivette Villarreal: Did you mention where your grandmother was from? No, right?

>> Charles David Brooks: No, but, you know, I've seen her when I traveled to Kemet. I say Kemet and not Egypt because Aristotle called it Egypt. When he got there, it was Kemet. When he got there with Alexander, he called it [inaudible], which evolved into the word Egypt. So, in Kemet when I was there, and traveling among -- along the Nile among the Nubian people I chose for them to lead me and take me into places that far removed from tourism, I saw her. And when I spoke to them about some of the things, my experiences and my great grandmother, she said, "Oh yeah, I know. We know. We know. We know." Because she said when she took a daily constitution through her village, she said she would look and on the left was like a slope from -- coming down from mountain areas and she could see the caravans. And the caravans I was always told was associated with merchants. And she would see that. So, I knew it was some minutes up Sahara in the area, you know.

>> Ivette Villarreal: So, your mind was in another different location from where you were at a time when she where -- you were listening that story.

>> Charles David Brooks: Oh, no, no. I was would not hear when she talked. When she told me stories, I was where she was at. I would be right in to the stories. I would be living them. I mean, she could talk into my ears and from my mind's eye would be like a projector. And the screen would be wherever I'm looking at, the sky or whatever. And I could see and be into what she was saying. And this, of course, this was before television, you know, computers, cell phones, before all of that, you know. I think my imagination was an asset.



>> Ivette Villarreal: Any particular story that touched your heart and your treasure until now?

>> Charles David Brooks: She told me when the ship landed, and I think it was somewhere around Port Royal and Beaufort. She said she saw this woman with this parasol, right? And she was standing there with this parasol, the woman was wearing some type of sear sucker kind of thing with little flowers in it. And the hat scene had some of the same images that what she was wearing. And she had gloves on. And she had these pair of shoes in her hand. And she told tell me as the ship was coming in and she's looking at this and she's focusing on this woman, she says, "I knew that that woman was going to take me. And she did." And then she says, "And she made me put on those shoes and my feet hurt even till this day." That story stuck with me. She was so vivid with it, you know? Oh, oh, oh, there was one more, and this was, I did, it was afflicted by the polio epidemic. And I think it was 1947, was it? And as a child, so I was paralyzed from my head to my toe. And I must say this for those children that might listen to this, be careful on what you say to your parents to thy own self be true. I was running up and down the streets in Brooklyn after coming from the South with no shoes on, you know. And my mother told me, "You wear shoes when you're up there." And I got caught up into a thrill running with them. Just, I mean, just caught up. I mean, the thrill took me away. It's like I wasn't even nowhere else but in that moment. When she was coming home from work, she was a nurse and I was supposed to been there to take care and watch over my brother and my sisters. And she tapped me. And when she tapped me and I come to my senses, what followed that was resentment. You know, how dare she take me out of this moment that I'm in, you know, as I'm coming to my senses, this is what's happening. And so, she says, "You know, I want you upstairs, you know, wash up, take a bath. And I want you to take your brother out in the stroller and sit under the tree. And don't move because I need to take a nap." She'd just come home from work. Well, the brother's going to anchor me where I won't be able to move. So, I resented that. And I remember my father once saying, you know, watch getting in just cold water or getting in just hot water, because you can bring your body into shock and can cause damages. I said, so I'm going to run just nothing but cold water and I'm going to jump in this cold water and then something's going to happen to me and they're going to be sorry. And I did that and this -- I'm fuming now because now I got to take him downstairs, and all of a sudden, going down the stairs my body was like lifeless and I rolled down the stairs and I fell out on my back and it's like I was dead. I was lifeless. And my mother came down. And then on the inside I was trying to tell her, you know, I'm alive, please don't throw no dirt on me. But what happened was I was in the eye and alone, but while I was in there, and the body was lifeless, I discovered the brain. And within the brain was the notion, you got to be truthful. You got to tell the truth to your part of this virus. And that was when I had to be able to admit like I did just now, my role, my part that contribute to this virus. And my great grandmother came and she was very old, well over a hundred. And she put her finger out and pointed at me says, "I told you better than this. I taught you better than this. That in the beginning was darkness and then there would be light." And left. And I fell out into something in a moment. My body was like going through a funnel, black funnel and the blackness was so black. I started to shout, and come out, and wake up. And unfortunately I said, "There would be darkness and then there would be light." And I let go. And as I let go, look like in the bottom of that pit was a speck. And my body rushed in it and hit it. And it

broke into zillions of pieces of brilliant lighting. And found myself running up and down the hospital ward hooping and howling. "Oh. Whoa." And all the crippled kids on the ward was saying, "Go, David, go." And the nurses was saying, "It's a miracle." And the brain told me, "Yeah, they going to make you an experiment." I said call my mother UL-70-233 and tell her to come get me. And didn't know what else to do but do that because I needed her to come so that I would not become someone's Guinea pig.

>> Ivette Villarreal: The stories that you heard when you were a child, those are stories with your grandmother, do you think that they inspired you to be the person you are now?

>> Charles David Brooks: Absolutely. Absolutely. I've come in, and as I've traveled through this land, I've come in contact with poisonous men and women who are into all kinds of wicked things that attempted to lead me into it. And many times I also were with them until I realized when I was -- this den that I was in. This den of thieves, this this nest of viciousness, and get up and leave. And in one case, I remember once, it was the second floor and there was this land and I jumped out the window and got away, you know. Because of that, to keep moving, you know, that I'm here in this world, but I'm here for a reason, you know. Not to be abused, or misused, or to abuse and misuse anybody else. You know, I'm grateful that people have contact me after not seeing me for 60 years and say, "Hey." You know, that's like wow to me. Ooh, you know. You know, I mean, there was no nothing burned. I can go back to Brooklyn, I can go back to Los Angeles or wherever, you know, and without ducking and dodging.

>> Ivette Villarreal: David, it has been a pleasure to have you. Thank you so much for coming to BibliObservatory Podcast and sharing your personal history.

>> Charles David Brooks: You're welcome.

>> Caroline Smith: And thank you for being here with us today. And thank you to our listeners. You can find BibliObservatory on Podbean, Stitcher, and TuneIn Radio, or add us on your favorite podcast app. Our podcast website address is [libraryvoices.podbean.com](http://libraryvoices.podbean.com). We love hearing from our listeners, so send us your comments and suggestions for future episodes.

>> Ivette Villarreal: BibliObservatory is a collaborative leaders' initiative to connect our communities and children with the joy of listening, reading, and writing those memories from childhood that changed our lives. Thank you for listening.